



BLACK'S FORT MESSENGER

The Official Newsletter of the Town of Abingdon, VA

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What's In A Name?

We know what you're thinking...why "Black's Fort Messenger"? It's a long story, but an important one, one that takes us back to Abingdon's origins.

The area we now call Abingdon was first surveyed by Dr. Thomas Walker and the Loyal Land Company, in the years 1749-1750. There was no immediate effort to settle the lands; and the next mention of the area was in 1760, when Daniel Boone and his exploration/hunting party were camped at a spring near the ground where a fort would later be built. The party was startled in the night when their hunting dogs were attacked by wolves from a nearby cave, giving Abingdon its first name, "Wolf Hills."

Early settlers recognized the importance of this location, as the Indians had made this the passing point of two great Indian trails. Between the years 1765 and 1770, several men purchased land from Dr. Walker and the Loyal Land Company, one of whom was Captain Joseph Black. Captain Black built his residence just south of the property now known as Mont Calm, but with the assistance of neighbors, erected a small fort, called "Black's Fort." It is believed that Black's Fort consisted of a blockhouse, surrounded by a palisade, with several smaller buildings within its perimeter.

The Fort was used for protection from Indian attacks until the summer of 1776. The Indians were planning a massive raid on all white settlements in 1776, and on July 4th, of that eventful year, an attack on Black's Fort left several dead or wounded. As a result, *messengers* were dispatched to other settlements north and west of the area to warn of possible encounters with the natives. An Act of the Assembly of Virginia in the fall of 1776 established Washington County. By a provision of that Act, Black's Fort was designated as the county seat. Because it was located directly on the Great Road and as centrally located as possible in the new county, it was an excellent choice, though one not without contention. It wasn't until October of 1778 that the Town of Abingdon was established by Act

of the Assembly of Virginia. However its early history makes it the oldest English speaking settlement west of the Blue Ridge Mountains!

In the 19th century, a gentleman by the name of T.C. Johnston sketched a map locating Black's Fort from a window in his home on Parks Street. The drawing found its way into the hands of Lyman Copeland Draper, who had planned to write a book entitled, "Sketches of the Lives of the Pioneers" from his research and interviews in 21 states east of the Mississippi and parts of Canada. Town Staff recently tracked this map to the Historical Society of Wisconsin and has obtained a photocopy with a brief description of the map. A copy of the map can be found on file now at the Historical Society of Washington County and will soon be properly displayed in Town Hall.

Now you know where The Black's Fort Messenger originated...we'll continue this history lesson in the next issue.

(Below) 19th Century map of Black's Fort and early Abingdon.



From the Corner Office

I would like to take this opportunity to unveil the Town's first issue of the *Black's Fort Messenger*, the Town's first public newsletter. The articles written and the photos taken are primarily compiled, edited and printed by various Town staff members; however, from time to time articles and photos will be provided by various individuals and organizations throughout our community. The newsletter will be printed quarterly on Council meeting dates in July, October, January and April, and will be made available to the public free of charge on the Town website (www.abingdon.com). Hard copies will also be available at the Town Municipal Building, Coomes Recreation Center and Newman Police Station. Additionally, if you would like to receive the publication by e-mail, please follow the instructions on the Town's information page of this newsletter.

Since being appointed as your Town Manager on November 1 of last year, I have made it my mission to keep the public as informed as possible concerning the Town's major projects and upcoming events. I am hopeful that this newsletter will go a long way toward that end. By way of format, the newsletter will feature biographical information about the Town's staff, Town Council, and various Council appointees. One segment will always be devoted to our Downtown Merchants Association relative to our recent designation as a Virginia Main Street Community. In addition, it will provide you with a variety of stories about the happenings in Town, various ongoing and upcoming Town projects, tidbits of history and provide you with a three month calendar of upcoming community and governmental events.

As most of you know, Abingdon is a cultural, historical and recreational melting pot of sorts. Our eclectic nature is what truly makes us unique and stand out as the "*Dream Town USA*" status that has already been bestowed upon us. Many seeds have already been sewn and many more will be in the future. I am anxious to see the fruits of our labor unfold. Our future is bright so hang on tight, keep your eyes and ears open ----- the best is yet to come.

I hope that you will find the newsletter interesting, entertaining and informative. Until next time, the *Corner Office* is always open. Feel free to stop by with your comments, questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Town Manager



Greg Kelly, Town Manager

Birthplace: Remington, VA

Education: Abingdon High School
Emory & Henry College
George Mason University Law School

Occupation: 20+ years practicing attorney
20+ years Adjunct Faculty at VHCC
5 years Abingdon Town Attorney

Years of Service: 8 months

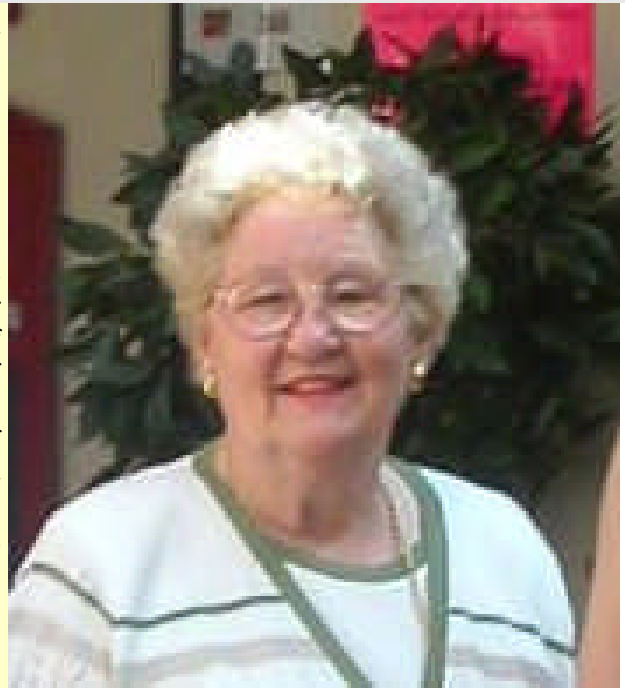
Hobbies: Jogging, Biking, Boating and Music

Interesting Facts: Current President, Washington County Bar Assoc.
International City/County Management Association (ICMA)
Virginia Local Government Management Association (VLGMA)
Virginia Municipal League (VML)
Local Government Attorneys of Virginia (LGA)
International Municipal Lawyers Association (IMLA)

Mayor

Mayor Lois Humphreys is a life long resident of Abingdon with a local family legacy that dates back to Washington County Militia man Nathaniel Dryden, who fought and died at the battle of Kings Mountain. She attended Central Elementary, graduated from Meadowview High School and The American Floral Arts School in Chicago, Illinois. In 1969, she started Humphreys' Flowers and Gifts, a successful business she ran for 17 years.

Mayor Humphreys has been active in church all her life and became a member of the Abingdon Methodist Church in her teens. Her community involvement includes membership in the Chamber of Commerce, Historical Society of Washington County, lifetime member of PTA, Creeper Trail Club and many others. She has been listed in *Who's Who* 1982-1983, *Women of the South and Southeast*, 12th edition of *Personalities of the South* and several other editions in the 1990's and 2000's. Mayor Humphreys has been a member of Abingdon Town Council for 19 years, serving as Mayor for 9 years and various local and state committees. Mayor Humphreys was married for 52 years to her High School sweetheart Paul Humphreys. She has two children: Jill Hagy Humphreys Dalton and Rick Humphreys, as well as several grandchildren and great-grand children.



Council Members

Robert H. Howard, Vice Mayor

Birthplace: Abingdon, VA

Education: Abingdon High School

Virginia Highlands Community College

Clinch Valley College (now UVA Wise)

Occupation: Highlands Union Bank-Vice-President/Security and Safety/Facilities Manager

Years of Service: 23 years as a Council Member

Interesting Facts: His wife has a small business in Abingdon, Plumb Alley Beads & Gifts. Member of Abingdon Fire Department Since 1972

Dr. F. H. Moore, Jr., Council Member

Birthplace: Abingdon, VA

Education: Emory & Henry College

Medical College of Virginia School of Dentistry

Occupation: Retired Dentist of 38 years

Years of Service: 40 years as a Council member, Mayor and Vice-Mayor

Interesting Facts: US Army, VA Municipal League President 2005, Kiwanis Club Member,

Edward B. Morgan, Council Member

Birthplace: Grantsville, West Virginia

Education: Pulaski High School

Emory & Henry College

Occupation: Director of United Medical, Lebanon, VA

Years of Service: 7 years as council member

Interesting Facts: Co-author of *The Virginia Creeper Trail Companion*, active in his church, gardening

Cathy Lowe, Council Member

Birthplace: Prince William County, VA

Education: Abingdon High School

Virginia Highlands Community College

Occupation: Owner of Male Ego for 28 years

Years of Service: 1 year as council member

Interesting Facts: Past President of Abingdon Rotary Club, Chairperson for Washington County Chamber of Commerce Committee and Programs for Small Business

Come See What's Growing Downtown

On April 18, 1793, a market-house was established on the courthouse lot; Tuesdays and Saturdays were the regular market days and continued for many years subsequent. Fast-forward 200 years...For nearly two decades, the Abingdon farmers market has made its home in several parking lots and most recently the Abingdon Police Station parking lot.

In September 2005, the Town Planning Department approached Town Council with a plan to construct a permanent farmers market and multipurpose facility on town-owned property at the corner of Cummings Street and Remsburg Drive. Nearly two years later, the idea has become a reality. With financial assistance from the Virginia Tobacco Indemnification Program (\$146,500), Washington County (\$17,000) and Town monies, the market is under construction. The design is a basic "L"-shaped pavilion to protect the farmers, their produce and customers from the elements; and will allow for flexible market hours. This particular location also allows the facility to be used for concerts and street par-

ties, permitting the town to close off Remsburg Drive to traffic, rather than Main Street. The new market will allow vendors more flexible hours to sell their produce. Town Council and the Farmers Market hope to have a Grand Opening celebration in early July.



Down on Main Street

On June 14, 2007, Governor Timothy M. Kaine announced that Abingdon was designated a Virginia Main Street community. "The Virginia Main Street Program has a proven record of providing assistance in the revitalization and preservation of Virginia's historic downtown district," said Governor Kaine. The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) administer the Virginia Main Street Program. The program helps communities develop strategies to create economic growth and pride in their downtown areas. Since its inception in 1985, the Virginia Main Street Program has supported the creation, expansion, or retention of more than 4,115 businesses and helped to create more than 11,571 jobs in Main Street communities. "Main Street designation provides resources and training to revitalize not only the character and historic architecture of these Downtown areas, but to revitalize the economic core—bringing back businesses, jobs and people to these communities," said Patrick O. Gottschalk, Secretary of Commerce and Trade.

Established about four years ago; the Hometown Merchants Association of Abingdon, a citizen group made up of independent business owners in town, has pursued efforts to plan events and combine advertising in order to draw visitors to downtown. In early 2006, the group began working on applying for the Main Street designation. Susan Howard (HMA Board Member) says, "Being designated will allow us to aggressively pursue additional funding." An Executive Director will be hired to focus specifically on Main Street, to recruit businesses when there are vacancies in order to improve the mix of shops. "In addition to the economic benefits that the Main Street program creates, it also makes significant improvements to architectural gems that exist in Virginia's historic downtowns," explained Bill Shelton, DHCD Director. All of this will be done within the context of historic preservation which is of utmost importance to a town like Abingdon. *For more information please visit www.mainstreet.org.*

The journey to acquire one of Southwest Virginia's most significant historic properties began in 2006 when the Town of Abingdon was approached by the Dunn family with plans to subdivide historic Dunn's Meadow, the hallowed muster grounds of the Revolutionary War era. The property was thereafter put on the market for sale at a price of \$1.1 million. The Town, as well as the National Park Service and Overmountain Victory Trail Association, were gravely concerned that the property could be sold to developers who would subdivide the 8.9 acres of land. This would ultimately end public access forever to this state and national, historic and cultural resource. As a result of this concern, negotiations began with the Dunn family to purchase the property. In the fall of 2006, the Town initiated an intensive grant fundraising campaign, targeted at preservation and acquisition of historic properties. To date, the Town has secured nearly \$300,000 in grant funding from The Overmountain Victory Trail Association, The Commonwealth of Virginia and The Virginia Land Conservation Foundation. Another \$200,000 in grants is pending. Ultimately, the Town was successful in negotiating a more favorable purchase price of \$800,000. In May 2007, the Abingdon Town Council held a public hearing and approved the purchase of the Dunn's Meadow properties.

The Muster Grounds on the Meadow are already the site of the annual muster of the Overmountain Victory Trail Association re-enactors. Here, re-enactors portray life in the Revolutionary era, tell stories and recount the events of the American Revolution, and the famous 1780 march from Abingdon to the Battle of Kings Mountain. The National Park Service has designated a Commemorative Motor Route that traverses the length of the OVT with numerous stop-off points at historic sites such as Dunn's Meadow, Pemberton Oak, and Sycamore Shoals. In the three-day Overmountain Victory Celebration at the Meadow in September 2006, over 1,000 4th graders from Washington and Russell County school systems attended the events... 'an educational enrichment experience that simply can not be duplicated in our classroom', according to Dr. Alan Lee, District Superintendent, Washington County Public Schools.

The National Park Service is committed to work with the Town and provide a wide variety of funding resources and technical assistance for planning, educational and interpretative programs.

The Overmountain Victory Trail Association has committed funds to assist in these preservation efforts. A master plan will be developed to assist the town in seeking future grants and giving officials direction in how to best preserve this property. Dunn's Meadow has the potential for development as a major cultural heritage destination, telling the untold stories of the lives and people of the Revolutionary war era in Abingdon and Southwest Virginia.



Ask Abingdon

Ask Abingdon, the town's new online government service, was activated on April 30, 2007. Congressman Rick Boucher was present for the unveiling of Abingdon's latest technology, which is now available to anyone with access to the internet or telephone. This new service was designed by Tele-works, a company which helps local governments provide its citizens with technology services. The creation of Ask Abingdon will provide 24 hour access to information concerning permits, emergency services, bill payments, zoning, and many other inquiries concerning the town. Brochures were mailed to all town citizens and businesses, detailing all of the services Ask Abingdon provides. Congressman Boucher was very pleased with Abingdon's progress and innovation, stating, "This cutting edge service once again confirms Abingdon's place in the front rank of communities offering e-government services..." To explore this new service, call (276) 619-0924 or visit www.abingdon.com



All Aboard!

In the 1930's Eleanor Roosevelt's first impression of Abingdon was the hustle and bustle of Depot Square and the Belmont Hotel. After passenger rail service ceased, Depot Square became neglected, eventually seeing the Town purchase the passenger and freight stations, and the U.S. Post Office replacing the storied Belmont. This fall construction will begin, with the assistance of VDOT Enhancement Funds, on a project that will not only please the eye, but make Depot Square a more pedestrian friendly district and a key link in the future townwide walkability town officials hope to achieve. Depot Square will again be a show piece in Abingdon's downtown with a more defined streetscape, plantings and proper parking, as well as a caboose, to be located in the area between the Historical Society and The Arts Depot. *For more information, please contact the Public Works Department at (276) 628-3167.*



Abingdon to Become 'Hotspot'



Since 1995, Abingdon has boasted to be covered by the wireless signal. The Town EVA, its Electronic Village of Abingdon fiber optic network. This past February, the Town purchased four Rohn Communication Towers from the Washington County School Board for just over \$500. These towers are the first step in setting up a Town-wide wireless program that Town Council plans to offer free to the public. That's right, FREE! The fiber "backbone" will still be the main line for broadband internet access in town, with the new wireless system feeding from it. The first tower site will be located alongside an existing tower on the eastern end of Leonard Street, atop Fruit Hill, sometimes known as Taylor's Hill. This site will allow for much of the town

to be covered by the wireless signal. The Town is currently studying three additional sites to locate the remaining towers. Along with the point-to-point towers, a Mesh System is being installed along Main Street to funnel the signals through downtown. This will provide three frequencies, one of which will be used as a secure line for emergency services/police and fire communication. The Town hopes this program will be of benefit to not only the existing residents and businesses, but also a draw for future economic development. *For more information, contact the Information Technology Department at (276) 676-2864.*

A Future Look Into the Past

At the end of the 18th century, Jacob Hagy, a Swiss immigrant, moved with his family to Abingdon, where their wagon company would thrive, becoming the largest industry in Southwest Virginia. His father's six hundred acre farm was part of the original tract surveyed by the Loyal Land Company, led by Dr. Thomas Walker. After the death of his father, Jacob would have a log house built on his share of the family farm. Many similar log structures were built, but did not withstand the test of time; however, in the years following its completion, the Hagy's house was hidden by weatherboard and further additions, preserving a piece of Abingdon's past.

The Hagy's log house, located just inside the current town limits on Hillman Highway, is being restored as a result of the work of Allyn Morton and the Fairview Foundation. Mr. Morton took interest in this project, creating the Foundation, which is named after the Hagy's original farm in Abingdon. The land and the house were deeded to the town by Dr. Jim Moore and his wife Judy, who have promised additional acreage for other buildings donated to the foundation. The work now being done consists of removing any additions that have been made since its original construction in 1824. When this is completed, there are plans to replace the roof and start further renovations appropriate for the time period. Other log

structures and artifacts have already been donated and are being disassembled and moved to the Fairview land. In the future, the foundation hopes to build a homestead, consisting of a dozen or more structures, representing life in Abingdon during the 19th century. *For more information or donations to the foundation, contact the Town Offices at 628-3167.*



Cemetery Committee Formed

On July 4, 1776, William Creswell was killed by a group of Indians, while defending Black's Fort from their attack. His body was laid to rest on a plot of land that has since become known as Sinking Spring Cemetery. Until March 2006, the cemetery, located at the western terminus of Russell Road and known for its weathered gravestones and that gated burial mound, was owned by the Sinking Spring Presbyterian Church. Sinking Spring Cemetery was formally deeded to the Town by the church that year in hopes that it would maintain and manage it. Town Council voted to create an advisory committee that would report on the future management of the cemetery. The Committee, consisting of seven members, one each from the Town, Historical Society of Washington County, Sinking Spring Church, Frost Funeral Home and 3 from the community-at-large, is now charged with the upkeep of the cemetery on both sides of Russell Road, as well as the White Family Cemetery on Taylor's Hill and any future cemetery property that may be deeded to the town. *For burials and other information regarding the cemetery,*

please contact the Town Manager's office at (276) 628-3167.



Have You Heard...

Signs, Signs, Everywhere Signs

The Town Council recently approved a revision of the Town Sign Ordinance, after recommendation from the Planning Commission. The newly revised ordinance, though more thorough and detailed than the previous ordinance, is more straightforward and defines the do's and don'ts of signage within the Town. After reviewing several ordinances from around the Commonwealth, staff created a draft that best suits the quaint atmosphere of Abingdon. In the past, temporary signage has been a topic of confusion. The new ordinance allows banners for grand openings and special events, but will require the prior authorization of the Zoning Administrator. Also, those signs that look like political campaign signs, but advertise a business or product are not allowed. However, the Constitution does protect the right of freedom of speech and any sign of a political or statement nature, without an advertisement of a business or product, is protected and therefore is allowed. For further information, contact the Planning Department, (276) 628-3167.



Code Compliance

Attention Pet Owners! Article III. Section 10-30 Animal Waste Disposal, of the Town codes states:

- a. Any person who is the owner, possessor or custodian of any animal shall promptly remove and dispose of all feces left by such animal on any public property or on any private property not owned and/or lawfully occupied by such person.
- b. Any person violating the provisions of this section shall be guilty of a Class 4 misdemeanor.

Abingdon 2027

After just over a year of study, the Town will unveil its Abingdon 2027 Comprehensive Plan in July 2007. The updated plan, developed in partnership with Hill Studios of Roanoke, VA, will address the needs of Abingdon and strategies to meet these needs for the next twenty years. The plan was developed through several public meetings where citizens were invited for input, and also a two-day design charrette, using the vision and values expressed by citizens. The plan is available in draft form on the Town's website or for public review at Town Hall. *For more information, contact the Planning Department at (276) 628-3167.*



Calendar of Events

July

1	Events at the Arts Depot (start)	
2	Town Council	7:30PM
3	Board of Architectural Review	5:00 PM
4	Town Office Closed in Observance of Independence Day	
4	Independence Day Celebration at Harry L. Coomes Recreation Center	
7	Survivor Fitness Challenge (start)	
10	Board of Zoning Appeals	6:00 PM
11	Open House—Comprehensive Plan Updates	4-7 PM
16	Tree Commission	7:30 PM
18	July Wellness Luncheon	11:30AM-1:00PM
20	Events at the Arts Depot (end)	
23	Planning Commission	7:00 PM
25	Electronic Village of Abingdon (EVA)	12:30 PM
28	Virginia Highlands Festival (begins)	
28	Beach Bash with the Drifter's (Main Street)	6:00PM-10:00PM

August

3	Survivor Fitness Challenge (finish)	
6	Town Council	7:30PM
8	Board of Architectural Review	5:00PM
10	Street Dance featuring Phantom	9:00PM-11:00PM
12	Virginia Highlands Festival (ends)	
14	Board of Zoning Appeals	6:00 PM
20	Tree Commission	7:30 PM
27	Planning Commission	
29	Electronic Village of Abingdon (EVA)	12:30 PM
29	August Wellness Luncheon	11:30AM-1:00PM
TBA	Heart Smart Triathlon	

September

3	Town Office Closed in Observance of Labor Day	
4	Town Council	7:30 PM
5	Board of Architectural Review	5:00 PM
10	Washington County Fair (starts)	
11	Board of Zoning Appeals	6:00 PM
15	Washington County Fair (ends)	
17	Tree Commission	7:30 PM
19	Overmountain Victory Trail Celebration (starts)	
22	Overmountain Victory Trail Celebration (ends)	
24	Planning Commission	7:00 PM
26	Electronic Village of Abingdon (EVA)	12:30 PM
TBA	September Wellness Luncheon	

Town of Abingdon

Office Hours: 8:30am-5:00pm Phone Number: (276) 628-3167

133 W. Main Street

P.O. Box 789

Abingdon VA 24212

Questions and Comments- abingdonnews@abingdon.com

Administration

<i>Greg Kelly</i>	Town Manager	<i>Cecile Rosenbaum</i>	Town Clerk
<i>Mark Godbey</i>	Finance Director	<i>Tony Sullivan</i>	Police Chief
<i>Myra Cook</i>	Tourism Director	<i>Floyd Bailey</i>	Information Technology
<i>Garrett Jackson</i>	Town Planner	<i>John Dew</i>	Public Works Director (Streets Division)
<i>Marion Watts</i>	Building Inspection	<i>Jim Smith</i>	Public Works Director (Wastewater Division)
<i>Joey Burke</i>	Fire Chief	<i>Chris Johnson</i>	Parks & Recreation

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